

Message Text

SECRET

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16

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SR-02 ORM-03 AID-20 IO-14 OMB-01 EUR-25

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19

DRC-01 SCA-01 /178 W

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R 160545Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3418

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 11202

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OTRA, PINT, PFOR, CB

SUBJECT: DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STEARNS VISIT TO THE KHMER

REPUBLIC OCTOBER 14-16

1. SUMMARY: DURING A 50-HOUR VISIT TO THE KHMER
REPUBLIC OCTOBER 14/16, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
STEARNS TALKED WITH MOST OF THE KEY KHMER LEADERSHIP
IN PHNOM PENH, AND VISITED KOMPONG SOM AND KOMPONG
CHAM. WITH THE KHMER FEELING THE HEAT FROM NEW YORK,
AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAILAND'S UNREST JUST SEEPING
IN, STEARNS' VISIT SERVED AS A USEFUL REASSURANCE,
AS MANY OF HIS INTERLOCUTORS ACKNOWLEDGED. THE KHMER
APPEARED MORE ATTENTIVE THAN OFTEN TO OUR BASIC
MESSAGES. HOWEVER, AS ALWAYS, THE DIFFICULTY IS THAT
THEY TALK MORE EASILY AND OPENLY WITH US THAN WITH
EACH OTHER, AND TEAMWORK IS AN EXCRUCIATINGLY DIFFICULT
IN THESE HARD TIMES AS IN EASIER DAYS. END SUMMARY.

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2. FLYING IN DIRECTLY TO REAM AIR BASE NEAR KOMPONG

SOM ON OCTOBER 14, STEARNS TALKED WITH THE FANK COMMANDER FOR THE KOMPONG SOM AREA AND VISITED THE FANK TRAINING CENTER, AN AUTODEFENSE UNIT, AND THE PORT FACILITIES. IN THE AFTERNOON HE WAS BRIEFED ON THE U.S. ECONOMIC AID PROGRAM AND VISITED REFUGEE CAMPS IN THE PHNOM PENH AREA. HE MET WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY TEAM AT DINNER.

3. ON OCTOBER 15, STEARNS CALLED SERIATIM ON HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL MEMBERS LON NOL, SIRIK MATAK, CHENG HENG AND IN TAM. TALKS COVERED THE RANGE OF OUR CURRENT CONCERNS: THE NEED TO MAKE CONSCRIPTION WORK, THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL SOLIDARITY TO THE KHMER STRUGGLE IN THE UN AND TO MAINTAINING U.S. CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR AID TO THE GKR, THE NEED TO REWARD ABLE MILITARY COMMANDERS AND PUNISH THE INCOMPETENT AND CORRUPT, AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BETTER GKR PERFORMANCE TO RETAINING THE SUPPORT OF THAILAND AND THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM.

4. ON SPECIFIC QUESTIONS, STEARNS URGED THE GKR TO MAKE PLAIN (AND IF POSSIBLE PUBLIC) ITS WILLINGNESS TO LET QUEEN KOSSAMAK GO ABROAD SHOULD AN AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FAMILY SO REQUEST IN WRITING. ON THE SOVIET APPROACH TO SIHANOUK, STEARNS COUNSELED THE KHMER TO MAKE NO MOVE UNTIL AND UNLESS THE SOVIETS SHOULD VOTE FOR SEATING THE GURNK.

5. STEARNS MET WITH SON SANN THE AFTERNOON OF OCTOBER 15, AND RECEIVED THE LATTER'S STANDARD LINE ON THE NEED TO JETTISON LON NOL SO AS TO ENCOURAGE NON-COMMUNIST KHMER ON THE OTHER SIDE TO RETURN TO THE FOLD. SON SANN ADMITTED THAT EVEN IF SUCH RETURN WERE TO TAKE PLACE, IT WOULD NOT ALTER THE INSURGENTS' PHYSICAL CAPACITY TO MAKE WAR, ALTHOUGH HE MAINTAINED THAT IT WOULD IMPACT ON THE INSURGENTS' POLITICAL WILL.

6. AT LUNCH ON OCTOBER 15, STEARNS MET WITH MINISTER FOR REFUGEES LOEUNG NAL, MINISTER OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT KONG ORN AND MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL SECRET

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ASSEMBLY. AT DINNER, HE MET WITH THE MAIN SOCIO-REPUBLICAN, REPUBLICAN AND INDEPENDENT POLITICIANS, INCLUDING IN TAM, SOK CHHONG, HANG THUN HAK, TAN KIM HUON, CHHAN SOKHUM, THAPPANA NGINN, AND OP KIM ANG.

7. STEARNS CHOPPERED TO KOMPONG CHAM ON OCTOBER 16 WHERE HE WAS BRIEFED BY COL. UK SAUV (THE ACTING COMMANDER) ON THE CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION, TOURED

THE HEAVILY DAMAGED CITY, VISITED THE CIVILIAN HOSPITAL
RE-EQUIPPED LAST WEEK BY THE U.S. AS WELL AS THE
INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS SURGICAL TEAM NOW BASED THERE,
OBSERVED REFUGEE CONDITIONS, AND WALKED AROUND THE
RUINS OF THE UNIVERSITY. RETURNING TO PHNOM PENH HE
MET WITH FANK COMMANDER MAJ GEN SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ,
AND DEPARTED AT NOON FOR VIENTIANE.
ENDERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONNEL TRAVEL
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: elyme
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PHNOM11202
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS ENDERS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PHNOM PENH
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731029/aaaaavfv.tel
Line Count: 123
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20-Nov-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <04-Jan-2002 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY STEARNS VISIT TO THE KHMER REPUBLIC OCTOBER 14-16
TAGS: OTRA, PINT, PFOR, CB, US, (STEARNS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005